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WORCESTER, MASS.
GAZETTE

E - 94,357
APR 24 1967

Commager Is Speaker At Leicester Exercises

In a wide-ranging commentary on American history, famed Amherst College historian Henry Steele Commager criticized "a current readiness to use government" to promote America.

Speaking on the "Uses of the Past," Commager said the work of promoting America, now being done by the United States Information and the Central Intelligence Agencies, was once a natural process.

He said the process came about because of common habits acquired through education and American literature. These, he added, permitted the founding fathers to have more confidence in the people and so be wiser than today's government leaders.

Commager, speaking at Leicester Junior College's Founders' Day program, also noted that the founding fathers "did not think it their business to inculcate a feeling of patriotism or national pride in the people."

A Created Nation

Commager also spoke about other aspects of the nation's past which make it different from most others.

He said America was a created nation, rather than one which grew. He added that "our history has been remarkably free of villains, but has had heroes aplenty."

A common enemy, binding

the people, Commager said, were the American Indians. "They had all of the advantages of a common enemy with none of the disadvantages — there was the built-in guarantee that you'd always win," he claimed.

Just as the nation was uniquely created, Commager said, it was unique that the colonial revolutionaries were able to survive the revolution and reach the "state of ultimate respectability."

Leicester Room

The program was sponsored by the Leicester Room Committee. The committee is gathering historical items for a Leicester Room, that will be part of a planned academic center at the school.

A drive to raise funds for the building, which will cost about \$773,000, began last week. The town is co-operating with the school in the "Room" project.

Besides Commager, Arthur F. Schrader, music associate and ballad singer at Old Sturbridge Village, rendered American songs beginning with the revolutionary period.

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